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## DELINQUENCY WORK IN BRITAIN: A SURVEY OF CURRENT TRENDS

EDWARD GLOVER

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Some few years ago I published a survey of the development of criminology in Britain from early in the century,<sup>1</sup> in the course of which it became clear that, although at first a number of independent agencies, religious, humanitarian, reformist, administrative, sociological and medico-psychological, had been groping vaguely towards an objective science of criminology, it was not until 1930 that the systematization of scientific methods of approach was signified by the founding of the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency. This organization was concerned at first with the diagnosis and treatment of pathological delinquency, and in consequence its staff was at first mainly medico-psychological in orientation. It was soon found necessary, however, to enlist the services of general and educational psychologists, sociologists and social workers, and in course of developing a teaching and training system, this multi-disciplined approach was further extended. The Institute also endeavoured, so far as its exiguous finances permitted, to promote and apply team methods in research. Shortly afterwards some hospital psychiatric centres began to pay special attention to cases of delinquency and in a number of Child Guidance Clinics the handling of delinquent juveniles began to play a significant part in their therapeutic programme. Other social agencies, e.g. youth centres, were of course also interested in the problem but more as a special focus for social therapy than a source of scientific information. Anyhow by 1948 it seemed that the stage was set for considerable advances in criminology provided only a sufficiency of trained workers supported by adequate funds could be found. It is therefore of some interest to enquire what progress has been made in the last six years.

Before coming to conclusions on this matter it is desirable to consider what were the main driving forces or incentives giving impetus to recent criminological work. These were in fact twofold. In the first place, psychiatry, sociology and educational psychology had, for various reasons connected with wartime necessity (treatment of psychiatric casualties, study of war-time conditions such as evacuation disorders

<sup>1</sup> EDWARD GLOVER, M.D., *Outline of the Investigation and Treatment of Delinquency in Great Britain 1912-1948: SEARCHLIGHTS ON DELINQUENCY*. International Universities Press, New York 1949.

selection of wartime personnel, etc.) entered into a provisional working partnership and their combined activities had received a good deal of official administrative support. The expansion following on this support and the consequent increase in prestige both of psychiatry and of social psychology has continued apace although, to be sure, psychiatry has now lost a good deal of the popular acclaim it received in wartime and for a few years afterwards. The rapprochement between these cognate sciences has not, however, been damaged thereby, and it was natural that, when delinquency problems began to loom largely in the public eye, recourse should be had to team methods of approach.

The second and perhaps the more powerful impetus can be traced to general anxiety both in administrative circles and throughout the country following rumours of post-war waves of criminal violence, which, however exaggerated, were found to be based on sound statistical evidence. This anxiety was fostered by newspaper campaigns; and it is interesting to observe the changes which can be brought about by journalistic and popular clamour. Needless to say, in the long run these tended to become reactionary and obscurantist in tone, but in the first instance they added force to the demand for an objective criminology. This manifested itself in various directions. The Criminal Justice Act of 1948 reflected, although in an etiolated form, some current views on disposal and treatment of criminals. Also, at the instigation of the Home Office, official calls were made for municipalities to set up committees to deal with local problems of crime; newspapers and film companies gave an increasing amount of space to criminological articles and problems, and generally a not-too-hostile reception was accorded the view that juvenile delinquency in particular called for combined efforts in a social and psychological direction.

Recently this attitude has been tinged with a certain vindictiveness in the popular reaction to violent crimes committed by adolescents and adults, which again was encouraged by journalistic activities and reflected in them. Reinforced by such influential figures as the Lord Chief Justice, the clamour is now more definitely directed towards increased severity in the handling of such criminals. Not long ago an elder statesman, Lord Samuel, added strength to this movement by his somewhat antiquated moralistic animadversions on the subject of homosexual offences. It remains to be seen how far this retrogressive tendency will hamper the existence and patient expansion of measures based on a more objective and dispassionate attitude.

Some indication of the confusion of counsel existing on criminological policy was afforded by the Parliamentary reaction to the Report of the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment.<sup>2</sup> The work of this Commission was of course seriously handicapped by the Prime Minister of the time (Mr. Attlee) who, when appointing the Commission, expressly excluded from the terms of reference the propriety of abolishing the penalty. Nevertheless, and despite many timidities and inconsistencies, some of which are inherent in the examination of such an emotionally explosive issue, the Report, to which incidentally Professor Thorsten Sellin contributed weighty evidence, in effect constituted one of the most damaging indictments of Capital Punishment that has appeared in the criminological literature of this or

<sup>2</sup> REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT. H. M. Stationery Office, London. 1953.

any other country. Nevertheless the immediate public response, as indicated in Public Opinion Polls, suggested that over 75 percent were in favour of retaining the capital penalty; and in fact, when the issue was left to a free Parliamentary vote, the abolitionists were defeated by a narrow majority.

Incidentally it is significant that the evidence on prevention and prediction put before the Commission by the I.S.T.D.<sup>3</sup> was totally neglected in its Report. On the other hand the Commission's searching investigation of the validity of the M'Naghten Rules, although so far shelved by Parliament, will no doubt lead to some modification of existing rigidities in the judicial assessment of criminal responsibility. And the recommendation to establish institutions for supervision and research relating to cases of criminal psychopathy is likely to hasten the appearance of the earlier projected Eastes-Hubert Centre, and in general to strengthen the hands of modern criminologists. In short, progress in criminology depends to a considerable extent on the degree to which permanent officials in the Home Office and other administrative bodies or research foundations can leaven the policies likely to be fostered by elected representatives whose personal views may be influenced in a retrogressive direction by vigorous expression of public prejudice.

A further test of the strength of this prejudice will be afforded by the deliberations of the recently appointed Departmental Committee on Homosexuality and Prostitution. Due largely to the publicity given in the press to certain sensational cases of homosexuality, a wave of public reaction reached the bar of the House of Commons and led to the appointment of a Committee which is conspicuous for the absence of any accredited experts on the subject. Hence the sanguine hopes of some sexual reformers that homosexual acts between consenting adults, provided they do not offend public decency, shall not be considered criminal, do not seem likely to be fulfilled.

#### SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS

To turn from general considerations to an assessment of progress in a scientific direction, it is of interest to enquire how far the Criminal Justice Act of 1948 has given official impetus to institutional effort. Study of the Prison Commissioner's Reports<sup>4</sup> indicates that apart from increase in the number of Open Prisons, Open Borstals, and Classification Centres, a beginning has been made with the organisation of two special types of Centre, recommended in the Act, namely, Attendance Centres and Detention Centres. Attendance Centres, of which there are now some twenty in operation, run either by the Police or by Children's Training Committees, are intended to provide an alternative form of disposal for young offenders who do not require institutional treatment but are considered to need something more drastic than probation. The hours of attendance are limited to twelve and preventive, deterrent and reformatory elements have all a place in the system.<sup>5</sup>

The Detention Centre, of which at the time of writing there are only two in exist-

<sup>3</sup> *Memorandum presented by the I.S.T.D. to the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment*. H.M. Stationery Office. London, 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Reports of the Commissioners of Prisons*. H.M. Stationery Office London 1952 & 1953.

<sup>5</sup> See JOHN SPENCER *A Note on Attendance Centres*. BRIT. JOURNAL OF DELINQUENCY I. 3. 230-1951; also ROY BRAITHWAITE *Attendance Centres for Young Offenders*. BRIT. JOURNAL OF DELINQUENCY II, 242, 1952.

ence, is intended to provide an alternative to imprisonment for offenders under 21 who do not yet require the prolonged residential training which is provided by an Approved School or a Borstal, but who have not responded or are unlikely to respond to probation and for whom a fine would be inappropriate. Junior (14-17) and Senior (17-21) Centres are projected. The regime is "strict and rigorous", the working week extends to 44 hrs., and includes constructive occupation and whole or part-time education.<sup>6</sup>

Limited in scope and technique as they are, such official additions to the range of penal institutions do not give a complete idea of the expansion of modern and liberal methods in Prisons, Approved Schools and Borstals. The Reports of the Prison Commissioners are increasingly concerned with various forms of treatment and rehabilitation, and there is no doubt that a new tradition has been established which is likely to lead to a marked increase in the psychiatric and social work carried out in both open and closed institutions. Here again it may be said that advances in institutional criminology lie in the hands of permanent officials of the Home Office who by an enlightened interpretation of Acts and Regulations can add immeasurably to the strength of crimino-therapy, to say nothing of research. A recent study of prediction methods in Borstal undertaken on behalf of the Commissioners by Dr. Hermann Mannheim, Reader in Criminology at London University, and Mr. L. T. Wilkins of Government Social Survey, is an apt case the report on which will shortly be published.

A similar tendency can be found in institutions existing outside the penal system. In a number of psychiatric hospital centres the previously unorganised and haphazard arrangements for dealing with delinquents have developed into special delinquent departments and an increasing number of special institutions for the treatment of maladjusted children are now run on modern multi-disciplined lines. But of course these are still few and far between.

Confirmation of this tendency in criminological work comes from a new quarter. Recent developments at the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency have provided means whereby modern developments in delinquency research can be estimated with some accuracy. The first of these was the founding of the *British Journal of Delinquency*, now in its fifth year of publication. The policy of this *Journal* is to publish the best original articles available, to record in its "Notes" various developments in criminology throughout the country and through its "Research Calendar," "Reviews" and "Abstracts" to keep readers abreast of current work.

A number of impressions can already be recorded. To begin with, although the scientific standard of most articles is by no means all that might be desired, an increasing number of contributions are submitted from a number of different fields, and amongst these numerical priority must be given to articles dealing with the population of Prisons, Borstals, Approved Schools, Institutions for maladjusted children, Youth Centres, etc.

Secondly, it is clear that group surveys supported by reliable statistical methods are increasingly popular: also that there is an increasing tendency to organize team-

<sup>6</sup> See also M. GRÜNHUT: *Juvenile Delinquents under Primitive Detention*—BRIT. JOURNAL OF DELINQUENCY V. 3. 191. 1955.

methods of research. And although it cannot be said that the conclusions are very penetrating and although there is a certain sameness about them, it is all to the good that this spadework should be completed as early as possible.

On the other hand, there is a remarkable sparsity of what might be called purely clinical investigations of different types of delinquency, in particular of psycho-analytical studies. This is the more regrettable in that, in the writer's opinion, progress in delinquency work will in the long run depend more on detailed case-studies of different types of delinquency than on team surveys, however broad the scope of the latter may be and however impeccably they are carried out. One of the main drawbacks to this more general type of survey is precisely that it deals with vaguely specified groups, such as prison populations, without any special check on the types of offence. The result is of course broad conclusions which are not very likely to advance our knowledge or to sharpen our therapeutic instruments.<sup>7</sup>

The second source of information, particularly on the value of team research, has been made available through the foundation by the I.S.T.D. of a scientific society which so far goes by the name of the Scientific Group for the Discussion of Delinquency Problems. This now comprises about 200 experts drawn from the fields of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, general and educational psychology, social psychology and sociology, social work, penal administration, organic medicine, in particular neuro-physiology, genetics, statistics and the law.

It is of some interest to note that the first task of this new society was and is to survey the different disciplines with a view to finding common definitions and factorial values that can increase the efficiency of team research. Needless to say this is by no means an easy task and it is doubtful whether it can be achieved by general discussions in a large group. A recent interesting account presented to the Group by Drs. Grey Walter and Sessions Hodge<sup>8</sup> of the uses of the electro-encephalogram in the clinical study of different delinquent types showed very clearly that a prerequisite of coming to terms whereby the issues can be fruitfully discussed is to submit the operative concepts to a preliminary "mixed" commission of enquiry.

Judging then by these two means of studying a cross-section of current research, work on delinquency seems about to show a snowball development. This must however be qualified by the consideration that a good deal of the work is mediocre and does little more than confirm ideas that have already been accepted for about twenty years. There is too little discrimination of terms, or, what amounts to the same thing, too easy acceptance of general captions, such as that of the "broken home." There is too little detailed clinical work, and too little exploration of specific criminological mechanisms in the clinical fields. And there is too marked a tendency to substitute various "tests" for proper psychiatric examination. Finally there is too little scientific imagination used in exploring unfamiliar avenues, such as the relation of antisocial behaviour to psychosomatic discharges.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See EDWARD GLOVER: *Team Research on Delinquency: a Psycho-analytical Commentary*. BRIT. JOURNAL OF DELINQUENCY. IV 3. 173. 1954.

<sup>8</sup> R. SESSIONS HODGE, V. T. WALTER and W. GREY WALTER: *Juvenile Delinquency: an Electro-physiological, Psychological and Social Study*. BRIT. JOURNAL OF DELINQUENCY. III 3. 155. 1953.

<sup>9</sup> See. EDWARD GLOVER: *On the Desirability of Isolating a Functional (Psychosomatic) Group of Delinquent Disorders*: BRIT. JOURNAL OF DELINQUENCY I. 2. 104. 1950.

Incidentally, one of the less welcome consequences of the rapid increase in volume of delinquency work, particularly in the field of psychiatric social work, is a tendency on the part of social workers, fostered, no doubt by the misguided enthusiasm of those who train them, to apply all sorts of interpretative techniques in their work with parents. A good deal of this interference, although not exactly bogus, is based on a remarkable and rather smug overestimation of the virtues of pseudo-analytical therapy. It is hard enough for a trained analyst applying his elaborate and lengthy techniques to the treatment of selected favourable cases, to obtain satisfactory results. What happens when half-boiled social workers, half-trained in analytical techniques, apply them indiscriminately in the delicate task of social guidance can but be left to the imagination.

One last matter may be noted. It concerns the allocation of research funds to the specific purposes of delinquency research. During those earlier years when it was comparatively easy to obtain research grants for any sociological effort supported by university centres, it was practically impossible to obtain support for researches in delinquency, which apparently were felt to be without the scope of social and psychological research, or possibly not respectable enough. In the past few years, owing largely to the increase of popular interest in "crime waves" previously noted in this survey, this policy has changed. Recently some substantial grants have been made for work on delinquency. But these have been mostly in support of general surveys which are unlikely to do more than underline conclusions which are already a little shop-soiled. It is practically impossible to obtain grants for detailed clinical research without which the larger conclusions cannot be given point. Foundation executives appear to be remarkably conservative in reaction to pioneer work on delinquency, a fact which stands in interesting contrast to the readiness with which they will support the most recondite researches in natural science. There will never be any effective progress in delinquency work until this timid and shortsighted policy is reversed.